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Andrew Rothstein
Deepening Crisis

Eddie Loyden MP
Builders and Housing

John Langan
Unemployment in Scotland

Wolf Ehrlich
Healthy Forces in Israel

Julius Pilchick
December 1905 The Great Rehearsal

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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DEEPENING CRISIS

'All the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet.'
Prime Minister BALDWIN to miners' delegation, July 30, 1925 (when capitalist investment in British industry was dwindling rapidly).

'Some very difficult, indeed bleak, months lie ahead, when real living standards will assuredly fall.'
Prime Minister WILSON at Guildhall banquet, November 10, 1975 (because British industry had suffered 'under successive governments' from 'inadequate' or 'misdirected' investments).

'We shan't eat our fill, but we will export [our grain].'
Tsarist Finance Minister VYSHNEGRADSKY (after famine in 1891-92, amid inflation, soaring prices, support for industrialists, search for foreign loans, etc).

'A bit of hardship hurts no one.'
Archbishop of Canterbury, October 15, 1975 (preparing the way for Mr Wilson's speech of November 10, and denouncing greed, materialism, etc).

November 14, 1975

When Vyshnegradsky—a well-known Stock Exchange operator as well as financial expert—said that 'we' could not eat 'our' fill, he meant, of course, the impoverished mass of peasantry of Russia, who had to sell almost all the grain they grew to pay rent and taxes. When he said that 'we' would export, he had in mind the landowners, merchants and village usurers who between them controlled all the grain that went for export, and who were interested in stabilising the Russian currency and attracting foreign loans. When the Archbishop spoke of 'hardship', he did not answer the question: 'Hardship for whom?' But he repaired the omission at the Guildhall banquet. He wondered if it would be 'starry-eyed' to ask people getting £5,000 a year to take a 5 per cent cut, and those with £10,000 a year, 10 per cent. But he made no mention of the workers in industry, agriculture, and social services, or the housewives for whom 26 per cent inflation in twelve months has already meant more than 'a bit of hardship'—with more promised by Mr Wilson. There was no starry-eyed wondering about *that*.

Stockwood was Right

So the Archbishop's appeal, with its double meaning, had its exact and ill-famed precedent, just like Harold Wilson's. The recovery which the Prime Minister then foreshadowed, through the

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further decline of living standards, was the recovery of monopoly capitalism. That system, whether under Tory or Labour management, has shown itself throughout the years since the second world war, incapable of doing more than stagger from 'go' to 'stop' and back. Instead of expanding and modernising British industry, its money kings—who are at the same time the kings of industry and commerce —have preferred to invest abroad. Why? Private profit for bond-holders and shareholders. Instead of using £4,500 million a year to transform both the economy and the social services, they prefer to spend the money on arms and armaments against an enemy who does not exist. Why? Private profits for the 'merchants of death', as they used to be called. Both these trends were explicitly denounced by *Labour's Programme 1973*. And the Bishop of Southwark was only repeating in popular terms the searing analysis made in that document when he said in his *Morning Star* article on October 31: 'An economic system which is based on selfishness and greed, and which leads to class division, injustice and unemployment is bound to produce social chaos.'

What Labour's Programme Said

Of course the system is disguised by the opportunist majority in the Labour government under the title of 'mixed economy'—and too many of the socialist rank and file have swallowed that particular pill, washed down as it has often been with a sweet draught of pious belief that 'we're not like the Russians'. Indeed, the main burden of the torrent of abuse levelled at Dr Stockwood for his article has been that he is an 'apologist for communism'; some of the letters in the press even advised him to emigrate to the USSR. But *Labour's Programme 1973*—issued by the National Executive Committee in virtue of a Conference decision—was not motivated by communism when it wrote (p 30):

> The experience of Labour governments has made it increasingly evident that even the most comprehensive measures of social and fiscal reform can only succeed in masking the unacceptable and unpleasant face of capitalism, and cannot achieve any fundamental change in the power relationships which dominate our society. . . .
>
> The experience of the last ten years has shown very clearly that economic planning in the national interest has been continually frustrated by the inability to exercise effective control over those vital economic processes which determine our national well-being. In particular, the level of investment in industry has shown itself to be highly resistant to incentives, exhortations and the limited measures of control over private industry which are at the disposal of the government.

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Every sentence in these passages is a slap in the face for Mr Wilson and the majority of his cabinet. But then, in return, as we are informed by the *Times* (November 11), his words at the Guildhall promising to boost private industry, and praising the City, 'had a designedly welcome ring in the ears of a City audience.'

New 'Strategy' against Socialism

Earlier, the *Economist* (November 8) had made an equally telling comment on the 'new industrial strategy' launched by the government at its meeting with employers and TUC representatives at Chequers in the first week in November, under the cloak of the 'National Economic Development Council'. 'The employers felt happier after Chequers,' was the succinct summing up of the City's principal mouthpiece. And no wonder. In the *Observer* next day, the reasons were spelled out:

> More firmly than ever the government rejects the left-wing solutions to our economic problems. . . . The privately owned part of the present mixture must be allowed to make sufficient profit to encourage expansion and to provide much of the necessary finance. . . . The proportion of the nation's resources absorbed by the non-commercial parts of the public sector must not be so great either to make it impossible for us to pay our way in the world or to push taxes on the great mass of the population to unacceptable levels.

In plainer language: (i) no 'direct control, through ownership, of a substantial and vital share of the growth industries, mainly in manufacturing'; (ii) guarantee the already enormous profits of the great monopolies; (iii) cut down the social services. Not one step towards socialism: on the contrary, reinforcement of monopoly capitalism.

Sham Planning

In an effort to make the Chequers programme *sound* like the economic planning which the socialist rank and file expects, the Wilson-Healey-Varley team who presented it set out a whole paraphernalia of stages to be undertaken. First, analysis of the 'performance' of the various industries in order to select which capitalist firms should get state help. Second, 'descriptive profiles' of the thirty most promising industries (from what point of view?). Third, planning by agreement between the Development Council and the employers—which means a *forecast* of what the industry concerned can do, without any obligation by law to do it. And a corollary, a

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loan of about £1,000 million from the (in fact) US-controlled International Monetary Fund—which, as the *Guardian*'s commentator truthfully pointed out, must involve 'stringent IMF supervision of our domestic economy', hardly likely unless the IMF find the government's strategy 'tolerably acceptable'. So both at home and abroad, the capitalists give their approval. One could easily compare the scheme with the famous 'National Plan' produced by George Brown in a previous Labour government—which also depended from beginning to end on the kind tolerance of the big monopolies—were it not (as Bert Ramelson pointed out in a cogent analysis in the *Morning Star* of November 10) that this time the General Council of the TUC is not only committed to support the 'new industrial strategy', but has thereby, in effect if not formally, thrown aside its own demands for full employment (as the condition for its accepting the £6 limit for wage rises), for expansion of the social services, more public expenditure to fight unemployment and stringent import controls. The £1,000 million cut in defence expenditure, demanded by Labour Party Conference, is of course not mentioned at all—though it would be a very modest contribution at best. In a message to his Bristol constituents last September, recently published as a pamphlet*, Mr Wedgwood Benn expressed the fear that 'working people may be bulldozed into accepting that the full burden of paying for the crises must be borne by them.' But that is precisely what the cabinet majority is doing and intending.

Clarion Call to the Rich

'Enrich yourselves!' was the watchword of the wealthy bourgeoisie in France in 1794, when they succeeded in overthrowing the rule of the middle class Jacobin revolutionaries who had come to power by the efforts of the common people, the *sans-culottes*. But that was after years of struggle in which the Jacobins, as the French historian Soboul puts it, 'were too conscious of the interests of the bourgeoisie to attach themselves unreservedly to the *sans-culottes*, and too attentive to the needs of the *sans-culottes* to find favour in the eyes of the bourgeoisie.' The modern British labour movement has not gone through the violent upheavals and repressions of the French revolution: but it finds itself confronted today, in the sixth Labour government drawn from its ranks, with a leadership which has put that clarion slogan of 1794 on its banner in 1975. Moreover, it has done so with the unspoken proviso that it is the great trusts who are to

*_Labour and the Slump_, Tony Benn, _Spokesman_, 12 pp, 15p.

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enrich themselves: for the working class, the slogan is 'living standards will assuredly fall'—just as the Archbishop said his piece about 'a little hardship' with the tacit proviso that it will bear a hundred times more hardly on the family with £25 a week coming in than on the family with £100 or £200. Whichever way you turn, the picture tells the same story. State schools deprived of equipment and adequate teaching staffs—while public schools can raise their fees to £1,500 or more and still be packed. Health services cut in all directions—while costly medical facilities are still at the disposal of the wealthy, even if pay beds disappear from state hospitals. In Northern Ireland, British military and political strength used, not to lay down and enforce a Bill of Rights for the population, but to perpetuate the system of Orange domination which is the mask for the will of British and Northern Irish big business—just as it was *not* used in Rhodesia, lest the rule of the small white minority, which safeguards British investments there, be overthrown by the vast black dispossessed majority. Of course there are the inevitable embarrassments of the system too—Lonrho, London and Counties Security, Slater Walker and others who practise the art of enriching themselves in less orthodox even if perfectly legal ways. But the oddities and excrescences should not be mistaken for the system itself. And the system is monopoly capitalism, otherwise known as the 'mixed economy'.

Abolish the Lords

Or there is the House of Lords question. The abolition of this institution, expressly preserved in order to give the landowners, business chiefs, ex-generals and other Tory reactionaries a perpetual reserved right to block or delay reforms required by the people—even if transmitted through the far from ideal electoral system which produces the House of Commons—is long overdue. At the moment of writing, it has delayed for probably a whole year the elimination of the last traces of the infamous Industrial Relations Act—as poisonous a law for the working class as was the Trades Disputes Act forced on the country in 1927 by the same Tory Party which holds sway in the House of Lords. Tomorrow it may well exercise the same power on measures to accept self-government in Scotland and Wales: all the more because the obvious purpose of the purely nationalist parties in those countries—to exploit self-government in the interests of capitalism—has aroused short-sighted opposition to the very idea of self-government in some sections of the labour movement. An all-out determination to win self-governing Scotland and self-

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governing Wales for socialism, which one must hope will nevertheless be the ultimate decision, will unquestionably meet with the hostility of the majority of their Tory Lordships. And, as the first comments on the Australian Governor-General's dismissal of the Labour government there have pointed out, what is to prevent a pigheaded Tory majority in the British House of Lords, at some urgent moment, giving the same occasion for the Queen to act against a Labour government? In short, the abolition of the House of Lords would not be socialism, any more than cutting so-called 'defence' expenditure by 50 per cent would be socialism; or taking over full control of investments by the big monopolies, to turn them homeward, would be socialism. But it would be a big step to clearing the way for socialism.

After Twelve Months

This number of our journal will appear almost twelve months after the lamented death of its founder and editor for 53 years, R. P. Dutt. He headed his last 'Notes of the Month', which appeared in January, after his death: '1975—Year of Decision'. In them he dwelt particularly on the advance of international detente, thanks to the initiative of the Soviet Union and its socialist allies: on the new victories for democracy and national liberation in 1974: on the crisis of world capitalist economy: and on the supreme responsibility of the British working class for the utmost unity in action to meet the conditions thus created, in order to prevent 'policies which have led to disastrous consequences in the past.' In fact, look at 1975! Detente has made a very great advance, despite determined sabotage here and abroad, by the successful holding of the Helsinki Conference, 'without precedent in world history', in Mr Wilson's words on November 10. Democracy made solid advances in the Italian elections and in the beating off of reactionary coups in Portugal; while more formerly subject peoples came into the United Nations as independent states. The deepening crisis of world capitalist economy, after many other manifestations, takes shape as these lines are being written in the urgent questions up for discussion by leaders of the six most powerful capitalist states—the US, Japan, West Germany, Britain, France and Italy—at Rambouillet, near Paris: questions of 'the world economic crisis from which they are all suffering' (*Times*, November 12). On the other side of the medal, the year has brought great economic, cultural and political achievements in the socialist countries. The British working class is moving in a rising tide of unrest, with a notable growth of understanding that all

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kinds of partial issues—unemployment, sackings, rising cost of living, housing tragedies, crippled hospital and other social services, threats to the abortion law, anti-apartheid, detention of the Shrewsbury pickets—all lead on to the need for left unity around the battle for socialism. And the steady unity in that battle of a large *Tribune* group of MPs in the House of Commons well reflects that understanding. To see the pattern of events developing, as RPD's Marxist analysis in broad outline anticipated it, must be as great an inspiration to all readers of *LabourMonthly*—and to all those new readers to whom we would like our journal to be introduced this December—as it is for the present writer.

Andrew Rothstein

Greetings to Robin Page Arnot

— co-founder of LABOUR MONTHLY and its Associate Editor throughout its existence —

on the occasion of his 85th Birthday, December 15, 1975

LABOUR MONTHLY FIFTY YEARS AGO

It needs little argument to show that in a workers' state, when the workers control the economic life of the community, science will be even more needed in the service of the state and of production than it is needed by big business today. It will be even more needed precisely because the workers' state will not merely take over the technique of industry which capitalism has developed, but will need to plan and organise economic life in a more perfect way—planning and organising consciously what capitalism leaves to the chance of the market—and because it will have new needs to fulfil in the lightening of human toil and the raising of the standard of life of the masses. And only the attainment of power by the workers, setting up a workers' state, can divorce science from its present unholy union and turn it to the service of the workers.

(From 'Labour Research' by Maurice H. Dobb, *Labour Monthly*, December 1925)

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WORKLESS BUILDERS AND HOUSING CRISIS

Eddie Loyden MP

THE rise in unemployment continues, unchecked. The October figure for unemployed (including school leavers) in Great Britain was 1,114,211. The total for the UK was 1,165,397. In the meantime, further threats of closures and lay-offs indicate an upward spiral for the coming months.

In particular, the call for more cuts in public spending will result in further loss of jobs in the public sector. The Labour leadership—having watered down the policies of the manifesto on which they were elected—have made it clear that the economic crisis will be resolved at the expense of cuts in the living standards of the mass of the people of this country.

No single aspect of unemployment highlights more sharply the tragic waste of our skills and resources—and brings into sharp relief the massive contradiction of this society—than the building and construction industry.

Unemployment in the building industry in Great Britain in October stood at 175,344. There were 28,319 jobless building workers in the North West Region alone (Department of Employment). A high percentage of these are skilled workers. Replying to a parliamentary question the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, Mr John Fraser, gave the following breakdown:

Bricklayers	5,206
Carpenters and joiners	6,817
Painters and decorators	8,298
Plasterers	2,327
Electricians	2,855
Other crafts	17,317

The rest are made up of labourers and others. But if account is taken of the ancillary industries, the unemployment figure exceeds 200,000. According to the president of the National Federation of Building Employers, over 60 per cent of firms are working at three-quarters capacity, and 75 per cent expect to be in this position in six months time—while 50 per cent are reducing their labour force, often substantially.

It is against this background that we have to consider the tragic waste of skilled manpower. For while thousands of building workers are forced into idleness, the housing queues grow longer, and the

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number of homeless families increases with local authorities resorting to housing some families in high cost hotels. In England and Wales alone, there were almost 1.3 million 'unfit' occupied houses. In addition, large numbers of dwellings lack one of the basic amenities: inside toilet, fixed bath, wash basin and so on. Information from Shelter indicates that there are thirty thousand homeless families in this country, and 7,000 children are in care as a direct result of homelessness. How is this urgent demand for housing being met?

House completions in 1968 exceeded 400,000. In 1974 the number had dropped to 268,000. During this period, there had been a drop of 50,000 completions in the public sector. Is this what we mean by housing priority—leaving the basic question of provision to the market forces?

Housing finance in local authorities poses serious problems. In a recent Labour Party publication, there is a 'model housing revenue account' which shows that, out of a total expenditure of £4,324,900, £3,159,000 goes in loan charges—in other words, interest to the money-lenders. The effects of meeting the insatiable demands of the money market can be seen in the eventual cost of housing to local authorities. In Leeds last year the average cost of a council house was £14,000—bad enough you might say. By borrowing over sixty years, the eventual cost to Leeds will be £106,800 to finance the building of such a council house. Who gains? 'The money-lenders' of the City of London.

Local authorities all over the country face the same sort of problem. This in my view is borne out by the reluctance of local authorities to start ambitious building programmes—in spite of the fact that the government is offering the highest ever subsidies and has told local authorities that there is no limit to the amount of subsidies available for new building. This situation produces a deadlock in the building programme.

These are some of the reasons for slump in the building industry. There are of course many more: the 'lump', the casual nature of large sections of the industry, and the general lack of control and social accountability of the industry. For it is not only in housing that there is an unfulfilled demand. Teachers are still trying to cope with overcrowded classrooms, medical staff with shortage of hospital beds; centres for the elderly and youth are still in scarce supply.

What must we do?

All social building must be based on a rolling programme with proper planning of resources and skills to meet the social need. We must end the market convulsions that create a stop-go situation in

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the industry. Building workers must have continuity of employment so that *they* have security of jobs, and *we* get the buildings so urgently needed. Speculative building, like Centre Point, must end; so too must land speculation. Such a situation would mean that the problems of homelessness and bad housing could be tackled and targets of 500,000 plus houses per year could become a reality.

We cannot, however, plan what we do not own. The nationalisation of the building and building resources industries must be a prerequisite to any rolling programme. Local authorities must have access to cheap land and interest-free loans. The Land Community Bill, weakened during its passage through the Lords and Commons, will not, in my view, fully resolve the problems of land for building.

This programme can only be achieved by a Labour government carrying out socialist housing policies. Only then will we end the twin miseries of inadequate housing, schools, hospitals, etc, and the massive unemployment figures in the building and construction industry.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SCOTLAND

John Langan
National Officer
Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs

A REPORT published by HMSO, *Census Indicators of Urban Deprivation*, covering the various areas of Britain, concluded that west central Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, was 'the most deprived area in Britain'. To lose your right to work is probably the ultimate in deprivation, and with unemployment having become an unfortunate way of life for many people in parts of Scotland over the years the conclusion which the report draws can be directly attributed to this.

With unemployment now soaring, there is a new and growing awareness in many areas of Britain of just how damaging it can be, not only economically but socially, and how soul-destroying if you are unfortunate enough to be one of the individuals who go to make up those cold and impersonal statistics published each month which set out regional and national levels of unemployment.

Scotland's trade union leaders did not need the aforementioned report to spell out the social consequences of persistent high un-

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employment. We have been conscious of all of this for many years, for even in so-called good times the people of Scotland are not unfamiliar with unemployment figures of around the 100,000 mark, Scotland's percentage unemployed running at double the national average, with many of our cities and towns carrying male levels of unemployment of 8-9 per cent.

With 1¾ million now out of work in the UK, and 130,000 of these in Scotland, the purveyors of the statistics have given the argument a new twist by suggesting that we in Scotland are not really doing so badly after all, as our national percentage figures are no longer double the national average. Some consolation.

Included in the Scottish figures are some 10,000 school leavers who have been unable to find employment, a figure likely to be augmented quite substantially when the Christmas school leavers join the queue. Much is being made of the Chancellor's efforts to alleviate unemployment in this particular area, and we now learn that of the £130 million set aside Scotland will receive £8 million, and the Manpower Commission hope to create some 4,000 teenage jobs in Scotland.

Whilst the spectacle of these young people at work may ease society's conscience to some degree, it is fairly obvious that the nature and the quality of the work being contemplated will make no long-term contribution to the welfare of the individual or the country as a whole. Scotland has suffered too much from expedients of this character, and as a consequence our towns and cities carry a disproportionate number of people who were shuffled into 'dead-end' jobs with all the future social problems that this was to create. Consequently, enthusiasm for this suggestion is tempered by the fact that we are once again perpetuating this system, no matter how our conscience may be salved in the short run.

This point was underlined only last week, when a paper presented to the International Forum at Aviemore showed, for example, that, despite over £500 million of government aid to Scotland over the past twelve years, the unemployment figures in Glasgow during that period had actually risen from 3.8 per cent to 6.5 per cent. Further, thousands of young men in Scotland today are serving apprenticeships in trades which will almost certainly be nonexistent in ten years' time, and this constant mis-match of labour supply and demand has undoubtedly contributed to many of our problems. Despite the aforementioned reservations, the growing role which the Manpower Commission would appear destined to play is to be welcomed. Perhaps they will be able to introduce a real level of

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planning to cover the most important of all our resources—our working population.

Scotland has had an ailing economy for many years and, whilst regional policies have helped to contain the position, they have not been able to effect the necessary balance to give our economy some permanent stability. Scotland's problems are invariably diagnosed as due to the run down in her traditional heavy industries, such as the steel industry, shipbuilding, locomotives and other heavy engineering, and the prescription has been the introduction of new light industries in manufacturing and consumer goods, and development into electronic engineering. Amongst the most distressing aspects of the present position in Scotland is the fact that many of the jobs now being lost are in the so-called new sector of the economy where our future stability was supposed to lie. Further, closer examination reveals that many of the major redundancies in the new field are in multinational controlled companies; and all our representations to the government and government ministers on behalf of our members, during the massive redundancies which have recently taken place, only serve to demonstrate how little influence the government can exercise over these conglomerates.

With the shipbuilding employers now making some very foreboding noises about the state of their industry, the employment prospects in Scotland, and particularly west central Scotland, are a cause for very serious concern.

For Scotland the only mitigating feature in all of this is North Sea oil, where it is currently estimated that some 25 thousand new jobs have been created. However, the Scottish trade union movement continues to be concerned about many aspects of this development. We note, for example, that the vast majority of these jobs are being created in the north east of Scotland whose limited infrastructures are now grossly over-stretched, whilst industry in west central Scotland, the industrial heart of the country, has failed to become involved in meaningful terms. The government, in recognition of this, has set up the Offshore Oil Supplies Office in Glasgow, whose job it is to try and ensure a fuller involvement of Scottish industry, and the trade unions are in constant touch with the government department monitoring developments in this field. The Offshore Oil Supplies Office now claim that something like 50 per cent of all oil-related work is being performed within the UK. Trade unions in Scotland would probably consider this to be a somewhat over-generous estimate, and would be equally quick to point out that, the volume of this work apart, the character of the work being done in

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Scotland is mainly of a sub-contract nature, and that Scottish industry has not become meaningfully involved in the new technologies required for offshore drilling, so essential if Scottish industry is to mount a real challenge to US and other companies in this field.

The government has in some ways recognised the validity of this criticism. This is reflected in their somewhat belated decision, for example, to acquire building sites for platform construction on the west coast which will involve Scottish companies in the technology, and help to soak up the labour available in the west central belt, though somewhat paradoxically redundancies in this field are now being forecast. The decision of the government to make substantial cash grants to certain Scottish universities, to study oil technology and thereafter advise industry, is also a pointer in this direction.

However, in our discussions with government ministers, the Scottish trade union movement has left the government in no doubt that we are pinning many of our hopes on the new Scottish Development Agency. Indeed, given the state of Scotland's economy, we see it as a real test of the government's intentions in this field, although the present figure of £300 million over five years to regenerate Scotland's economy is clearly inadequate. However, when taken in conjunction with the newly created British National Oil Corporation, which will also be based in Glasgow, and the massive revenues arising from the oil development (government estimates £2,000 million to £3,000 million per year), herein lies a wonderful opportunity not only to restructure Scotland's economy but that of many other deprived areas of Britain.

Oil is probably the last of Britain's great natural resources, and it provides a one-off opportunity if properly used. The trade union and labour movements will require to be very vigilant in this field if the opportunity is not to be dissipated or even exported out of the country altogether.

Persistent high unemployment and the oil development have now also posed some very serious political problems for Scotland, and this is reflected in the growing support for the Scottish National Party (30 per cent of the vote at October 1974) and in yet another decision—that of setting up a Scottish Assembly with all the long-term (and perhaps not so long) political consequences for Scotland and the UK that this will bring. The message to the Labour Party from the Scottish people is now quite clear in that they can no longer count on their traditional vote in Scotland and that they will require to earn that vote. Further, so far as Britain is concerned, without Scotland being able to deliver her forty odd Labour MPs we just

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would not have a Labour government in Britain. Hence the significance of the unemployment, particularly amongst Scotland's youth and first-time voters who, in their present state of understandable disillusion with the system, are ready-made foil for other levels of political appeal, however misguided.

Perhaps new voters in Scotland are 'instinctively right'. They recognise that the present system, even under Labour, has persistently failed Scotland and her people. If they are sufficiently misguided to accept the short-term appeal of the SNP, and should the SNP by unfortunate political mischance ever form an administration in Scotland, young people will quickly learn that the SNP are firmly committed to perpetuating the same system. This is evidenced by their efforts to placate those like Sir Hugh Fraser, who have a vested interest in it, and who apparently found no incompatibility in joining the SNP.

Tony Benn, in that wonderful speech to this year's Labour Party Conference, put his finger on it when he said that Labour was not elected to nurse and manage capitalism through yet another crisis, but to change the system entirely. We have had that philosophy during the 75 years of the Labour Party's existence. Isn't it time that we really started to apply it?

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EXTENDS

Seasonal Greetings

TO ALL
TRADE UNIONISTS
AND
LABOUR MOVEMENT
WORKERS

R. W. BUCKTON
General Secretary

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HOUSING CHALLENGE TO GOVERNMENT

Jack Woodburn*
General Secretary
Federation of Chiltern Tenants' Associations

HOW many tenants yet realise the full implication of the measures being taken by the government on housing? How many trade unionists, Labour Party or Communist Party members understand the real depth of this attack? At a time of rapidly rising prices and huge rate increases, this extra burden will affect millions and make nonsense of the £6 limit imposed by the government on wages.

The new Act is one through which the Labour government is supposed to keep its election promise to repeal the notorious Tory Housing Finance Act of 1972. In fact it does nothing of the kind.

When the rent freeze for council tenants ended in March, nearly six million households faced increases of between £1 and £2 per week. As the housing crisis continues with millions in need of decent homes, the Act says nothing whatever about the need to build more council houses. True, since Labour came to power, there has been a slight upturn in the number of council houses built, about 12,000 a month. This is still far below the level of building needed.

With the ending of the private rent freeze last March, many families faced the first phase of rent increases decided on by rent officers and rent assessment committees. Already hard hit by the system are those passing from 'controlled' to 'regulated' status, because their homes have basic amenities such as baths and hot water systems. Indeed, recent figures published in *Housing and Construction Statistics* (Department of the Environment) show that under the new Act rent rises of up to 32 per cent are now faced by thousands of tenants living in rent-regulated accommodation.

In England and Wales during the first quarter of this year, some 10,870 private tenants had their regulated 'fair' rents re-registered at higher figures. The average increase was 32 per cent and the average re-registered rent was £299 a year or about £6 per week. Rates are payable on top of this. Those whose tenancies this year changed for the first time from controlled to regulated face much bigger rent rises. Since controlled tenants must have been in occupation of their homes since 1957, they include many elderly people.

* Jack Woodburn is an Executive Committee member of the National Association of Tenants and Residents.

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In the first quarter of this year, 2,490 householders who had been paying a controlled rent had regulated rents registered at over £4 a week increase. As rents are put up every three years in phased instalments, all private tenants, including those already regulated, will have a continuing crippling drain on their resources. In some scarcity areas enormous rent demands are being made, like those of up to £9 a week demanded by the Freshwater Property Group and quoted in the House of Commons by Mr Arthur Latham MP.

In other areas, less spectacular but equally unjust increases are demanded and won by private landlords, as was pointed out by Frank Allaun MP during the committee stage, quoting a case from a rural area of a tenant whose rent was raised from £1.07 to £4.50 a week plus rates. This, despite the fact that his conditions had greatly worsened and the main bedroom cannot be used because of damp. Mr Allaun pointed out that such property was built about 100 years ago for less than £80, and had often been acquired very cheaply by current landlords. The only reason why landlords can impose such rents is scarcity of homes. They know that tenants are desperate and will pay to keep a roof over their heads.

It is true that the Labour government has kept its promise not to decontrol some 700,000 controlled tenancies for homes which do not have basic amenities. The Tories had planned to switch even these properties to 'regulated' status with a consequent soaring of rents. Now they will stay controlled. This concession only affects tenants who have been in their homes since 1957 and who lack such necessities as a hot water system and bath. However, landlords will be able to charge them 12½ per cent per year of the amount spent on repairs. These are some of the facts about the Housing Act. Does it really repeal the Housing Finance Act? Of course not.

It does abolish 'fair rents' for council tenants, and it does away with the rent scrutiny boards which, under the Tory Act, were able to fix council rents. The councils have regained power to fix their own rents. But it keeps the rent offices and rent assessment committee structure for assessing 'fair rents' in the private sector.

It is worth remembering that this whole system was initiated by a Labour minister, Mr Richard Crossman. Now Mr Anthony Crosland comes in to attack still further and far wider with his 'the party's over' attitude. For thousands living in appalling housing conditions the party is not 'over', because for them there had never been a party. For council tenants, the restrictions on spending on housing management, maintenance and repairs will mean less and less done, yet rents will rise again next year.

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Encouraged by Labour government policy, not a few local authorities are taking the opportunity to continue the attack, some councillors calling for the reintroduction of the means test. Why should council tenants be treated like second class citizens? They have no security of tenure. They are not protected by the rent Acts from arbitrary eviction, unlike most private tenants. They have little choice of where to live.

Council housing was meant to be one way to redistribute wealth but it failed. After the second world war it looked for a while as if council housing would be more than just a means of providing shelter for the working class. It was to be of better quality, based on high ideals, and would be more generally available. By the early 1950s, the first post-war economy measures came in, and the so-called realities of economic life undercut this socialist principle before it had taken root. The position is clear: public housing today is no more about redistribution of wealth than banks are in business to give money away. We have come full circle.

With council housing, private investors have found it easier to make money out of working class housing. Whilst councils build, investors sit back and collect the interest on their loans. Vast amounts of subsidies and rate support grants go to pay off interest in loans from city financiers.

Public squalor replaced that created previously by private greed, and with the new cuts, will continue to do so. Some councils are now the biggest slum landlords in our cities. Some of the worst housing in the country is not the nineteenth-century jerry-built terraces but council houses and flats constructed in the last thirty years. They have not been built as homes fit for workers, but as 'units of accommodation' for 'units of production'. Usually they have been, and are, poorly built at high densities. Condensation, unworkable heating systems, falling plaster: the tenant has to pay the price of failure. Council estates have been used as a laboratory to test out every new and bird-brained design idea of architects. Point blocks, slate blocks, deck access, pedestrian segregated, no access, no parking, no shops, no ball games, no play areas.

Once built, council estates are often forgotten. Tenants wait months, often years, for repairs, regular maintenance often non-existent. Public money is squandered because neglect now means major repairs later.

The post-war attack on council housing began in the 1950s under the Tories with the lowering of standards of building. The size of a three bedroom house fell from 1,050 sq ft in 1951 to 909 sq ft in

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1954, and is still falling. The introduction of the notorious Housing Finance Act is yet another example. The Tories also planned the shift of finance for rented housing away from council housing to housing associations. Indeed, the Chiltern District Council, in common with many councils, have proved this—supported by Labour councillors. The government has taken on board this Tory inspired plan.

Investors wanting a bigger slice of cake are turning away more and more from council houses to housing associations, offices and the like. One of Britain's largest landlords now concentrate half their business in such. The trend is underlined by the statement of the Building Societies' Associations, which said that the demand for mortgages remains remarkably strong. One of the reasons was a continuing trend of property from private renting to owner occupation.

Labour governments have not strengthened the security of council tenants nor have they made any radical attacks on the Tory goal of owner-occupation or the untaxed capital gains that owners enjoy on the sale of their property. We are well aware that thousands of people are forced to buy their homes because of restrictive practices of present day landlords. The fact that thousands of houses remain empty, and are likely to remain empty, is a clear indication of weakness in the Labour Housing Act.

If the increase in rent for re-registered private tenants is between 40p and 80p a week, it will be phased over two years. Increases over 80p are phased over three years. Not so council tenants. For them, within the next few months will go the annual letter—'Notice to Quit'—with the blackmail: 'Agree to the rent rise, and we will continue to keep you as tenant'—with no phasing. For, as I have stated, council tenants are not covered by the statutory rent Acts. The attack continues under the present government. It is not enough to boast it has 'rescued' council house building programmes, while cutting the money for repairs and renovations.

Among those who should be challenging the new Act are those trade unions which passed resolutions demanding the repeal of the Tory Housing Finance Act. They should be taking an active role in the campaign that is being mounted up and down the country for pressure to put our government back on the rails and restore the socialist policy.

What should be the provisions of a genuine Labour Act on housing and rents? The priorities are first that the Act should state categorically that every citizen has the right to a home in healthy,

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planned surroundings, maintained in a good state of repair and let at a rent the tenant can afford without deprivation of other natural needs; second that it should assist local authorities to develop an increased building and improvement programme; third that it should lift restrictions on management, maintenance and repairs; and fourth that it should repeal Section 105 of the 1974 Housing Act.

EDGAR YOUNG

October 5, 1899 - November 10, 1975

Labour Monthly loses a valued contributor, and the broad movement for world peace a remarkably versatile worker, by the sudden death of Commander E. P. Young (RN retired). With a public school education, Young from 1917 to 1934 was an officer in the Navy, rising from cadet to Lieutenant-Commander and receiving higher rank in 1939. Upon retirement he took up voluntary work in many fields of international relations, especially concentrating on the fight against fascism. After the second world war, Young's vigorous exposures of propaganda hostile to the socialist countries found their place in the correspondence columns of journals as far apart as the *Times* and the *Observer* on the one hand, and the *Morning Star* and *Tribune* on the other. An executive official of the British Soviet Friendship Society, he also represented it on the National Peace Council and at conferences abroad. He was decorated for his services to peace by Czechoslovakia, the USSR and Romania and to anti-Nazism by the GDR. Our journal expresses its deep sympathy to his widow, Amicia, and their son, Simon. His articles in *Labour Monthly* included: *Atomic Strategy and the Admiralty* (1952); *Cold War Against Britain* (1953); *Atomic Guns—or Atomic Butter?* (1954); *Trade Bans Boomerang* and *The Soviet Navy Today* (1955); *Hungary's Background* and *Where is that Defence White Paper Now?* (1957); *A Real 'People's Shipyard'* (1958); *From Hitler's Munich to Johnson's Escalation* (1967); *Soviet Sea Power an Instrument for Peace* and *Red Light in Laos* (1968); *Soviet Merchant Shipping*; *Earl Mountbatten of Burma* and *The BBC and Munich* (1969); *Lessons of the Second World War*; *Cambodia—A Plot Backfires*; *New Light on Munich* and *'Soviet Naval Menace'—The Truth* (1970); *British Shipbuilding* (1971); *Diego Garcia*; *The BBC's External Services*; *Nato Crisis and Cyprus* and *Simonstown* (1974); *Defence White Paper*; *Absurdities of Diego Garcia* and *Diego Garcia—Another Watergate* (1975). He was a regular reviewer of books for the journal, and was working on two reviews on the day he died. These appear in this issue on pp 568-9.

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HEALTHY FORCES IN ISRAEL

Wolf Ehrlich*

THE tripartite Sinai agreement of September 4, 1975 (US—Egypt —Israel) has not solved any of the problems facing Israel: it has sharpened the contradictions inside Israeli society. The US administration and the Israeli government know only too well that they will be unable for any long period to maintain the *status quo* in the Middle East. They needed a stop-gap agreement to show that there is no loss of momentum.

The agreement reached weakens the drive towards the Geneva Middle East conference; it introduces the US CIA-screened experts into sensitive points of the Middle East scene; it enhances imperialist positions in the region; and it weakens Arab anti-imperialist unity. Like the two disengagement agreements of 1974, the new agreement does not ban the war danger; it may even make more imminent the outbreak of hostilities.

The only positive aspect, from the point of view of progressive public opinion in Israel, is that Israeli forces will again be withdrawn from part of the occupied territories, thus lending weight to the argument that of necessity all paths lead to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all territories occupied in June 1967. This is a point of educational or political impact, but it remains a minor point compared with the strongly negative aspects of the agreement.

Government and extreme right opposition have found it valuable to engage in a noisy sham fight over the issue of withdrawal according to the Sinai agreement. Extreme right agitators charge betrayal of national interests; government spokesmen point to the necessity to assist the United States in its drive against Soviet influence in the region, hinting that thereby Israel may play a part in weakening the trend towards detente in international relations.

One of the major results of the agreement is an unprecedented acceleration of the arms race in the region. US Secretary of State Kissinger bought the consent of both the Egyptian and the Israeli governments by promising delivery of the latest sophisticated weapons. And while Egypt will have to pay for most of it cash down (with the assistance of Arab oil-exporting countries), Israel's purchases will to a high degree be financed by US grants and loans.

The mad arms race is in obvious contradiction to the general development in the world after the final phase of the Helsinki

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Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. It works against the drive towards a just peace settlement in the Middle East. It would make a new war, if it erupts, awfully destructive. It accentuates Israel's dependence on US imperialism and foreign capital. It increases the foreign debts of Israel to a threatening degree. And it sharply worsens the economic situation in Israel.

The military budget, together with the dollar payment for state debts (capital and interest) brought about by former wars, reaches some 60 per cent of an overall budget of some 56 milliards of Israeli pounds. This astronomical sum, earmarked for military purposes, excludes even such temporary solutions to economic problems as are attained by some other capitalist countries. The Israeli government balances its foreign payment accounts by taking increasingly big loans. It can avoid bankruptcy only by printing money. It is unable to slow the pace of inflation—about three times that of Western Europe.

It tries, as the governments of all capitalist countries do, but with undisguised sharpness, to relieve its difficulties by lowering the real wages of the workers. This is done by increased exploitation, pressure to keep nominal wages more or less constant, in spite of quickly rising prices, by increasing the tax burden on the working people, and by lowering social services. It proudly boasts of having substantially lowered what is called private consumption.

The Israeli working people have started actively to oppose this policy and to try and prevent a further lowering of their living standards. The strike movement has gained momentum from the workers of the Elat-Ashkalon pipeline, over the Ashdot port workers and various sections of El-Al workers, to librarians, teachers, nurses, workers in tinned goods and tyre workers, bank and income tax employees, workers of the Negev phosphate works, salaried bus drivers.

The demands of the strikers vary, as do the concrete forms of struggle, but all express the determination of different sections of the working people not to resign themselves to the results of government policy. While ministers and the media vie in attacking the trade unions, and the Knesset (parliament) is used to mobilise public opinion against the strikers, the result of the barrage remains weak. This shows that the impact of ideological and political manipulation has markedly decreased. The Histadrut (trade union) leadership shows the usual vacillating attitude, and in all essential questions sides with government.

More often than in the past government has recourse to police intervention, to labour courts and to criminal court procedures

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against strike leaders. This only serves to accentuate the class struggle. And with government as the biggest employer in the country, economic struggles have great political significance—which is also partly reflected in the consciousness of the working people.

Unity among the peace forces is growing. While in former years it was the Communist Party of Israel alone that advocated a principled peace line in the interest of all the peoples and the states in the region, there are now various political parties and groups working together for peace, in the framework of the Committee for a Just Peace between Israel and the Arab countries. The Committee's programme is based on three points: withdrawal of Israeli forces to the June 4, 1967, lines; recognition of the rights of the Palestinian Arab people to self-determination, including the right to establish its own state alongside Israel; recognition of the security and sovereignty of the State of Israel, as of all the states in the region.

The Committee has in various ways demonstrated its aims and popularised its slogans. Its greatest manifestation was in August this year at Megiddo. Several thousands of Israelis, Jews and Arabs, went by car or bus to a point near the June 4, 1967, line and held a mass meeting in a eucalyptus grove, with some twelve personalities of different political colours as speakers. Afterwards, the participants symbolically marked the borderline between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine with great posters in Hebrew, Arabic and English—a ceremony that was well covered by the television networks.

Add the broad struggle against government terror in occupied territories, against mass arrests, persecution and torture. Add the unprecedented mass meeting held in October in Nazareth against the further colonisation threats in Galilee at the expense of Arab *fellaheen* and municipalities, made by government and Zionist leaders, bringing together a great number of Jewish and Arab personalities, including members of the Knesset, Communists and others. Add the highly successful report-back meetings of personalities and delegations to the Soviet Union.

All these developments together show that the political landscape in Israel is changing, and while there are signs causing anxiety, there are changes in a positive direction. The changes are reflected in contradictions appearing in the Histadrut leadership and within the Zionist parties.

The positive changes that will come about in the Middle East will not only be brought about by outside forces and the struggle of the Arab peoples. Healthy forces within Israel will have their say too.

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Woodcraft Folk celebrate 50 years

At their 1975 Celebration Camp of Nations last August, the Woodcraft Folk brought their motto, 'Span the World with Friendship', into practical play. Visiting delegations from many nations were made welcome to camp life in the grounds of Stanford Hall, which was opened to the Woodcraft Folk for the occasion by the Co-operative Union. During the two weeks of activities, they proved they could 'live, work, learn and play together'.

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The Woodcraft Folk motto spelled out i

Children from the camp's 'Village 3'—Wigan, Bradford and Leeds areas of the Folk. Below, an Aldermaston march scene re-enacted in the pageant.

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scene from the pageant on 'Open Day'

Children from the GDR and Czechoslovakia and refugee children from Chile with Joan Lestor MP at the opening ceremony.

Photographs supplied by the London Co-op Education Department

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1905: THE GREAT REHEARSAL

Julius Pilchick

THE workers' struggles against oppressive political systems are records of supreme heroism, against heavy odds, against vicious repression and reprisal. The Russian revolution of 1905, with its peak point, the Moscow December rising, whose seventieth anniversary we salute this year, was no exception.

The background to the events of 1905 was the unmitigated exploitation and poverty of the Russian people over decades in the context of the semi-feudal economy of the country. Industrial capitalism had begun to develop slowly towards the middle of the nineteenth century, but its progress was restrained by the persistence of a serf economy in agriculture and the consequent slow expansion of the domestic market. Agricultural production was still of a medieval, pre-capitalist type. The bulk of marketable grain, the main Russian export, was produced by a mass of small producers with the most primitive equipment, while the peasants suffered the intolerable servile dues and obligations imposed upon them by the landlords. This situation could not but lead to unrest among the peasant masses. Outbreaks against the landlords occurred with increasing frequency, 86 in 1858, 90 in 1859 and 108 in 1860. Tsarist Russia was the last stronghold of serfdom in Europe; the pressure for change was growing irresistibly, and led to the peasant 'reform' of 1861.

The 'reform' was a mixed blessing for the peasantry. The peasant became personally free, i.e. he could no longer be bought or sold as a chattel, but in the process he lost about 25 per cent of the land he had held formerly as a serf, and the portion of land which he lost was the best and crucially important, meadows, pastures and roads. The peasant was thus compelled to rent extra land, often the very land taken from him, and for which he paid either in money or in labour on the squire's estate.

The new conditions created by the 'reform' resulted in the progressive and catastrophic impoverishment of the bulk of the peasantry, and the freedom he gained was the 'freedom' to sell his labour power in order to live. But conditions had been created for the development of capitalism in agriculture and the emergence of a rural proletariat. Economic compulsion was replacing feudal compulsion.

Industrial capitalism also made some headway after the 1861 reform, particularly in the steel industry owing to the increase in railway construction, and the textile industry, where large-scale machine industry displaced small-scale manufacture, and weaving

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mills displaced handicraft weaving. Its progress, however, was still retarded by the narrow home market.

The working class was ruthlessly exploited. The working day was 14 to 16 hours, and the labour of women and children was extensively exploited, as it was in Britain during the industrial revolution. Wages were miserably low. Civil rights were completely lacking. Working class economic and political organisation was justly feared and was persecuted by the tsarist autocracy.

However, realising that working class militancy could not be stifled, the autocracy decided to deflect it into 'safe' channels by creating official 'workers' organisations', whose funds were controlled by the chief of the Moscow police, Trepov. All the rules had to be submitted to him for approval.

This attempt to keep the working class quiescent was not successful. In the late autumn of the same year, at Rostov, a strike, which started in the railway workshops, spread rapidly to all the important works in the city. Thousands gathered at open-air mass meetings daily demanding political freedom. The response from the Cossacks surrounding one such meeting was a hail of bullets into the crowd, which killed six and seriously wounded many others. Working class militancy continued to grow.

Unfortunately, internal disputes among the working class leadership confused the masses and rendered the work of organisation difficult. 'From the very beginning of the mass working class movement in Russia,' wrote Lenin (*Two Tactics*, February 1905, *Collected Works*, Vol 8) 'i.e. approximately for the past ten years, profound differences had existed among Social-Democrats on questions of tactics.' It was only after the Russian Social-Democrats split into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at their second congress in August 1903 that Lenin and his colleagues were able to press forward with the formation of a genuinely revolutionary fighting party, highly disciplined and having as its objective the overthrow of tsarism.

Through the Bolshevik underground weekly newspaper *Vperiod*, published in Geneva from December 22, 1904, to May 5, 1905, and smuggled into Russia, regular contact was maintained with party organisations in Russia, particularly in St Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa and Baku. More than 40 articles by Lenin appeared in it. It played a vital role in combating the divisive activities of the Mensheviks, and clarified the issues arising from the developing revolutionary situation in Russia.

A major disruptive factor was a police agent, the popular priest, Georgi Gapon. He conceived the provocative idea of a 'peaceful'

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petition to the Tsar to lay before him the workers' grievances and begging him to convene a Constitutional Assembly. Only the pathetic belief in the father-figure of the Tsar still nursed by many workers made it acceptable to them, despite the opposition of the Bolsheviks.

The bloody events which were to follow were sparked off by what Lenin described as 'a quite ordinary clash between labour and capital' —a strike at a St Petersburg factory, the Putilov Works, which broke out on January 3, 1905. Four workers were dismissed, and when demands for their reinstatement were summarily rejected the factory struck work. Thousands of workers in other factories joined the strike in a massive demonstration of solidarity.

The delivery date of Gapon's petition was set for Sunday, January 9. By Saturday the 8th, the strike in St Petersburg had become general. Such a massive class outbreak had not yet been seen in Russia.

It was in the very heat of this massive confrontation with capital that Gapon carried out his provocative plan. On Sunday, January 9, thousands of unarmed workers—men, women and children—assembled for the procession to the Winter Palace to present their petition to the Tsar. They were allowed to proceed almost to the gates of the Winter Palace. And there they became the victims of a dreadful massacre. A hail of bullets killed and wounded thousands.

The effect upon the working class of this barbaric action was immediate and electrifying. Far from being cowed, their fury exploded. An official report published on Monday, January 10, said: 'The mob threw up barricades with barbed wire entanglements and red flags.' Barricades, in fact, were thrown up all over the city. Shots were fired at the troops; the crowd disarmed many of the police.

The general strike spread to the provinces and to Moscow. A revolt broke out in Riga. There were protest demonstrations in Lodz and Helsingfors. A rising took place in Warsaw; strikes in Baku, Odessa, Kiev, Kharkov, Kovno and Vilno. In Sevastopol, naval stores and arsenals were ablaze, and troops refused to shoot at the rebellious sailors. The first phase of the Russian revolution had begun. After the massacre, even the most backward workers called for the immediate overthrow of the government.

Lenin summed up the lesson learned by the proletariat after the bloody event: 'The revolutionary education of the proletariat advanced in one day further than it could have advanced in months and years of drab, everyday, stupefied existence.'

Years of controversy concerning the role of the proletariat in

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the revolution were settled decisively by the events following Bloody Sunday. The Mensheviks claimed that, since it was a struggle for the establishment of a democratic republic, the role of the proletariat must be a supporting one, as it had been in bourgeois democratic revolutions elsewhere. Lenin contested this view. In earlier revolutions the bourgeoisie were the vanguard because the proletariat was still too feeble to fill that role, whereas in Russia the position was reversed. The Russian proletariat had proved themselves in action which had confounded the tsarist autocracy. The existence of a strong, disciplined revolutionary party, the Bolsheviks, guaranteed that the proletariat as vanguard were capable of still greater successes.

International reaction hostile to the revolutionary events following Bloody Sunday was predictable. The bourgeoisie rushed to the aid of the Tsar *in extremis*. The German navy was put on stand-by alert, and German troops were massed on the Russian frontier. French and British bankers hurriedly advanced loans to the Tsar to reinforce his shaken authority.

However, bourgeois hostility was countered by international working class solidarity. After Bloody Sunday, workers held solidarity and protest demonstrations at Russian embassies and consulates in all countries. In France, Jean Jaurès wrote in an editorial in *l'Humanité*: 'From now on there is a river of blood between the Tsar and his people. By striking a blow at the Russian people the Tsar has inflicted a mortal wound on himself.' The General Confederation of Labour resolved to hold protest meetings throughout France.

In Britain, too, the Social-Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society and trade unions held protest demonstrations. August Bebel in Germany, writing in *Die Neue Zeit*, wished the Russian proletariat victory, because 'what the proletariat of a given country gains also benefits the proletariat of all countries.'

Disastrous defeats suffered by the Russian armies in the war of 1904-6 with Japan, owing largely to corruption and incompetence at the top, were now followed by unrest among the troops and the navy. The bourgeoisie also became restless. Having at first supported the war, they began to express opposition. Pressure on the Tsar was mounting on all sides.

Political strikes and demonstrations continued for some months, with the revolutionary movement reaching its peak with an all-Russian general strike in October. It was in the course of this strike that the workers of St Petersburg created a new type of revolutionary organisation which assumed a prime role—the soviets (councils) of workers' deputies, elected from the factories. The example of the

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St Petersburg workers was followed in all the larger Russian cities.

The October general strike affected nearly all the industrial workers of Russia, and even government employees, lawyers, students and shop assistants. In his article, 'The First Victory of the Revolution', Lenin wrote: 'October 30 will go down as one of the great days of the Russian revolution. The strike of a whole people, unparalleled anywhere in the world, reached its zenith' (*Collected Works*, Vol 9, pp 427-34).

The strikes brought the country to a standstill. On October 30, the Tsar was forced to issue a Manifesto which granted a restricted form of franchise for elections to a *Duma* (consultative assembly). This was accepted by the bourgeoisie as a great victory.

The revolutionary working class, however, viewed it with suspicion, regarding it as a ruse to get them to abandon the struggle to overthrow tsarism. The struggle continued and, with the government powerless to act in face of the nationwide upheaval of the masses, revolutionary newspapers appeared freely for the first time in Russian history, in St Petersburg and other Russian cities, with circulations ranging from fifty to a hundred thousand copies. In several cities the state authorities were deposed, and the soviets of workers' deputies took over control, thereby beginning to assume locally the character of a provisional revolutionary government.

The weakness of the peasant movement, however, acted as a brake on further advance. Despite the fact that the peasant movement developed extensively, it was still too scattered to have a decisive effect on the course of events.

The revolution of 1905 reached its climax with the Moscow rising in December, when about 8,000 organised and armed workers, led by the Bolsheviks, confronted and for nine days resisted a tsarist onslaught. Not daring to use the Moscow garrison, the authorities brought crack troops from St Petersburg to put down the rising. With its defeat, the revolution began to recede.

The Liberal bourgeoisie ran for cover, content with the concessions extracted from tsarism by the heroic actions of the proletariat. The tsarist regime was badly shaken, but not overthrown. But the working class, under Bolshevik leadership, had demonstrated their courage and resilience, and had learned valuable lessons in tactics and organisation.

The counter-offensive by the Tsar's Black Hundreds could not erase the lessons of the 'Great Rehearsal'. Twelve years later the issue was settled with unchallengeable finality by the Great October Revolution of 1917.

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EDUCATION CUTS

Mick Luker*

THE context within which we must view the successive cut-backs in the education budget, since December 1972, shows them without a doubt to be an integral part of a right-wing strategy to solve the economic crises of British capitalism. This strategy, which has been adopted by successive governments, has included wage restraint and cuts in public expenditure as central themes.

The 'social contract' as a variation of this theme did, however, involve a conception of the 'social wage', covering social services and education, and going hand in hand with any voluntary wage restraint. It could be argued that the reluctant acceptance of the £6 limit at the TUC was made on the assumption that this was still the case.

All local authority services, including education, are at the moment severely strained. Indeed, it is estimated that a 4.2 per cent increase in real terms is needed in order to keep the system going. The policies before us now represent a clear and devastating reduction in services provided.

Cut-backs in public expenditure also have the effect of creating unemployment: not just in the public sector, but in the private sector of industry too. Cut-backs in public spending are, therefore, inextricably bound up with all the other issues facing the labour movement—unemployment, wage restraint, etc. Turning specifically to education, any cut-backs can be seen to have an almost irreversible, detrimental effect.

The starting point for the present cut-backs of £520 million over the next four years is that £463 million has been cut from the education budget since 1973 (nearly £1,000 million in six years). In 1973, in comparison with other EEC countries, Britain was next to bottom of the league table of percentage of gross national product (GNP) spent on education.

The practical outcome of central government policy on education can only be described as sheer madness. Newly qualified teachers are completing their training and walking straight to the dole queue, while schools are drastically undermanned. Indeed, the National and Local Government Officers' Association estimates that undermanning in local government as a whole is at least 10 per cent, and in

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some cases as low as 20 per cent, below effective manpower levels. Madness, too, when we look at the capital expenditure programme in education. In the early 1970s, central government encouraged an increase in the capital expenditure programme, which has taken four or five years to reach fruition about now. But these new resources are to be shelved.

The overall response by the labour movement to these cut-backs has been slow and in many ways fragmented. Interesting developments have, however, begun. When Gloucestershire County Council proposed cuts of 3 per cent to the education budget, which involved devastating cuts in nursery education, over 200 fewer teachers and a total of £1.4 million off the budgeted education expenditure, there were a number of immediate responses.

An organisation, People Against Cuts in Education (PACE), was formed, consisting of teachers, parents' associations and others, who campaigned specifically against these cuts with petitions, lobbies and demonstrations. However, they demanded safeguarding educational standards by an increase in the rates, they did not challenge government policy and had only tenuous links with the local labour movement. At the same time there were also isolated actions against redundancies in the public sector by the unions concerned, and a campaign by the National Union of Students at all six local colleges which culminated in a large student demonstration.

The Gloucestershire Association of Trades Councils called a conference which began to form the basis of a co-ordinated campaign bringing together the various groups, and began to translate the 'increase the rates' demand of PACE and the isolated actions of the

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF OPERATIVE PRINTERS GRAPHICAL AND MEDIA PERSONNEL (NATSOPA)

Sends Seasonal Greetings To Trades Unionists Everywhere

OWEN O'BRIEN
General Secretary

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individual trade unions into a political struggle against the government's policies of wage restraint, cuts and unemployment.

This campaign has begun to highlight a complexity of issues: for example, the financing of the public sector, which is strangled by the hold of the finance houses. *Labour Research* (July 1975) estimates the total debt interest of the public sector at £5,075 million for this year. Thus, the £1.4 million education cut-back in Gloucestershire must be considered in conjunction with the £6 million budgeted for interest repayment by the County Council for the same year.

The battle will be won and lost at the local level in the mass movement. Campaigning initiatives depend to a large extent on the local situation. However, the nature of the struggle shows that the issue does not only directly concern public sector unions or groups like parent associations. Therefore, our campaigns must try to involve all unions and all campaigning organisations, each working certainly in its immediate interest, but combining at another level in a collective political struggle, with an overall perspective linking all issues.

WOMEN WORKERS IN MANCHESTER

Edmund and Ruth Frow

INTERNATIONAL Women's Year is a suitable time to recall that Manchester had two women's trades councils when few other cities had one. The Manchester and Salford Trades Council recognised the need to assist women workers in their efforts to raise their appalling standards of wages and their equally disgraceful working conditions, as early as 1889. These efforts were not too successful because the women were unused to organising and were afraid of losing their jobs. However, three years later when Lady Dilke, President of the Women's Trades Union League, visited Manchester, they promised every assistance and carried out their promise by appointing a full time woman organiser. She spent eleven weeks going from workshop to workshop distributing leaflets and contacting women workers.

At a meeting held in the Mayor's Parlour on February 1, 1895, a group of men and women who were connected with the Liberal Party decided to set up a Women's Trade Union Council to cover the Manchester and Salford District. Two full time women organisers were appointed. One was Sarah Welsh who, as Mrs Sarah Dickenson,

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served the Council until 1901 when she was joined by Eva Gore Booth.

A prominent member of the group that worked with the Council was Miss Esther Roper. She was a graduate who recognised the need to help women to help themselves. She was an ardent advocate of votes for women and her attitude that women's welfare was inextricably mixed with the right to vote did not always meet with the full approval of her liberal colleagues, and eventually led to a split.

The Women's Trades Council had sixty-eight members of whom only twenty were trade unionists and only four were women. This position improved with the turn of the century and the women were strengthened by the addition of several young suffragettes including Christabel Pankhurst.

When the suffrage campaign developed, the members of the Liberal Party and the women on the Council who were actively advocating women's suffrage clashed, and the split that took place set up a second organisation called the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council. The two organisations worked in apparent amity and in close co-operation with the Trades Council, even on the vexed question of the vote.

In 1909 a joint committee was set up with four representatives from each of the women's councils and four from the Trades Council to try to heal the split. In 1910 this committee organised a joint demonstration to publicise trade unionism among women workers. After the war, in 1919 the two Women's Councils merged with the Trades Council, and Mary Quaile was appointed as secretary to the Women's Group of the Trades Council. In some ways the women lost when they merged with the Trades Council, but the history of the women's struggle for emancipation shows that real progress is only made when men and women work together.

Unfortunately, the full story of these fascinating developments cannot be told, because the minute books and reports of the Women's Trades and Labour Council have not survived. But some reports and other material relating to the Women's Trades Union Council are in the Working Class Movement Library, housed at 111 Kings Road, Old Trafford, Manchester, M16 9NU (telephone 061-881 9269).

This library is available to students and trade unionists who want to study the history of the labour movement from the late eighteenth century to the present. Many aspects of the movement are to be found there, trade union emblems and badges, leaflets, posters and prints as well as a comprehensive collection of books. Visitors are welcome if they phone to make an appointment.

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BOOKS

Moses Kotane:
South African Revolutionary
Brian Bunting
Inkululeko Publications (London), 310 pp, £3

BIOGRAPHIES of political leaders are far richer when their lives are closely intertwined with history and great struggles. This is certainly true of South Africa. Long before apartheid became the official doctrine and policy of the white rulers in 1948, the system of white minority rule was met with heroic resistance. Now apartheid is sharply denounced throughout Africa and strongly condemned in the United Nations—though one still awaits more positive action against it. All the same, the main arena of struggle is within South Africa itself.

The author's father, S. P. Bunting, together with two British migrants (Bill Andrews and D. Ivon Jones) were among the founders of the revolutionary movement in South Africa. When the Labour Party, which they had formed, forsook its principles and supported the 1914-18 imperialist war, they formed the War Against War League, then the International Socialist League, and this became the forerunner of the Communist Party, formed in 1921.

At first it was not easy to win the trust and confidence of black Africans, but in time they won over active local black leaders of the African National Congress and recruited thousands into the ranks of the Communist Party. Moses Kotane was not one of the founding members of the Communist Party, but in later years became one of its outstanding black leaders, and its General Secretary from 1939 onwards. At present he is undergoing hospital treatment in Moscow, and, having reached the age of 70 years, this was the time chosen to publish his biography.

In a brief review one cannot hope to portray the full record of one who has been in the thick of the struggle for nearly half a century. One of a family of eleven children (ten still alive), his early life was not easy. Starting work at the age of 13 years, he became a migratory worker, moving from job to job at low wages, and subject to racial discrimination in all of them. In 1928 he managed to get a job at a bakery in Johannesburg, joined the Bakers' Union, went along to evening classes organised by the Communist Party, and in 1929 became a member.

When Kotane joined, things had changed since 1921. Many black Africans had joined the ranks, and were the majority at branch meetings. There were conflicting political trends between the European and black African members, and this conflict had come to a head a year earlier at the 6th Congress of the Comintern which, in fact, set the aim of 'an independent Native South African Republic, with guarantees for the white minority'.

The opposing lines were not always clear cut, but Bunting was strongly against it. As a member of the British delegation at this Congress, I well remember Bunting and his wife, Rebecca, trying to convert us to his view. On this matter the author is frankly critical of his father's failure 'to appreciate the revolutionary potential of the national movement,' though correctly paying tribute to his great qualities as a Communist.

Kotane and most African leaders welcomed the decision of the 6th Congress, and sharp arguments lin-

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gered on for years in South Africa. In the early 1930s Kotane was studying in Moscow, and did not return until early in 1933. He was deeply shocked at the situation within the Party, and in February 1937 declared to two colleagues (John Gomas and Ray Alexander) his intention to leave the Party. They persuaded him against this course, and Kotane later declared: 'They stopped the rot, and I eventually found myself again in the centre of things in the Party.'

There were still dark days during and after the second world war. The Suppression of Communism Act in 1948 (which enshrined the racialist regime in South Africa) was a serious blow. All the more serious because the majority of Party leaders (with only two against) decided to liquidate the Communist Party. Still, the mass struggle was being waged by the African National Congress (of which Kotane was one of the outstanding leaders). Later this was also declared illegal, together with almost every kind of progressive organisation.

However, it was not long before the Party was reborn and has since waged an heroic illegal struggle, together with the ANC. The book overlaps with *Fifty Fighting Years* by A. Lerumo (the late Michael Harmel), giving the history of the Communist Party, but fills out episodes in the life of Moses Kotane, no longer able to lead mass actions, but whose record will always be remembered by all those engaged in the struggle for the liberation of South Africa.

IDRIS COX

Peadar O'Donnell: Irish Social Rebel
Michael McInerney
O'Brien Press, 256 pp, £3.50

PEADAR O'DONNELL came from a class which has all but disappeared, the Irish small farmer. It was a peasantry like none other in the world, its origin in the disintegration of a gentile society by foreign capitalist invasion. Some time, somebody must write the history of Ireland from the standpoint of this class, the indomitable Irishry Yeats rather despised, indomitable in language, culture and survival power.

The survival of an agriculture based on tiny fragmented holdings was naturally in question in the twentieth century. But by what was it to be replaced, and how? We have seen how it was replaced. The peculiar mode of capitalist expansion, described by Marx in *Capital*, proceeded and continues. The bourgeoisie threw the holdings together. The people emigrated and they and their descendants labour in English factories and building sites, their qualities largely ignored. But need it have been so?

If capitalist development is the only possible course of development, brand Peader O'Donnell as a dreamer, a romantic or a fool. His life has concerned that issue vital to

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all rural countries, the possibility of an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry. And in a country like Ireland, the centuries old centre of whose political life is the struggle for national liberation, O'Donnell naturally developed Connolly's principle of the alliance between republicanism and labour, with labour in the lead.

In my opinion, he has throughout his life presented a perfectly possible alternative to what has happened, and what is happening, and it is a tragedy that the Irish labour movement as a whole never heeded him. And it is eloquent that Ireland's most famous Communist, the late Sean Murray, did heed him and was his lifelong friend, as this book shows.

This is a journalist's, not an historian's, book. It was compiled from tape-recorded interviews with Peadar and his friends. Consequently there is some looseness and overlapping, and the strict rigour of science is occasionally lacking.

But it is a fine story well told. Peadar O'Donnell was trained as a school teacher, became a trade union official in the days when the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union was sweeping Ireland, served with Liam Mellows on the executive of the IRA in the civil war, survived to play a part in the international peasants' struggle, the agitation against the land annuities in Ireland, and poured forth a stream of articles, pamphlets, novels, all while maintaining the closest possible connection with the working class movement. He was active in the cause of republican Spain.

More recently he contributed to the campaign against absorption into the Common Market. He spoke in London on the fiftieth anniversary of the 'execution' of Liam Mellows, with whom he was in jail in 1922.

This book is written for an Irish public. Perhaps it assumes knowledge (and knowledge of attitudes) which the average English reader may not possess. But he will grasp readily that here is a man whose ceaseless positive activity would encourage anybody. To those people in Britain today who realise that, if they are to avoid pitfalls in matters which today menace themselves, they must put away preconceptions and learn about the real Ireland, here is an epitome of a century of Irish life, the grand old man of the revolutionaries, to set beside the great prophet of the possible, Mr De Valera, who has just left us.

C. DESMOND GREAVES

From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines 1881-1889

Willard Wolfe

Yale University Press, 334 pp, £8.75

SPOT the mistake: 'First hand knowledge of working class life, which was almost unique among contemporary socialist intellectuals, enabled Shaw to anticipate by two decades Lenin's discovery that the proletariat was inherently nonrevolutionary.' More than one? Well, Willard Wolfe's study of 'English socialism' in the 1880s is a bit like that all through.

However, the book has its uses. Despite its bias, it does throw some light on the early Fabians and draws on a number of unused archives to do so.

As usual, they emerge as a very curious bunch. Originally there were only two or three dozen of them. They were almost all middle class, intellectually somewhat amateur and insecure, and, as is not uncommon in such circles, combined a very earnest

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MARX

M C Howard and J E King

This exposition and appraisal of Marx's economic theory combines a detailed treatment of the sociological and political foundations of Marx's economics with a systematic analysis of its theoretical coherence. Emphasis is given to assessing the validity and relevance of Marxian economics in the study of modern capitalism. Special attention is also paid to recent critical analyses of Marx by prominent economists, and there is a detailed outline of the relationship between Marx and classical political economy.

The authors' perspective is one of critical sympathy. They share Marx's hostility to capitalism, and his view of economics as a historical social science, but throughout they treat Marx's work as he himself would have wished: as a piece of scientific analysis capable of refinement and susceptible to error.

Cased £5.50net Paper £3.50net

Longman

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personal careerism with a bewildering series of Utopian schemes for the betterment of the lower orders.

Where did they get their socialism? Certainly they did read *Capital* volume one. Or rather, like Hugh Gaitskell and Harold Wilson, they read the first few chapters. But when Professor Edgeworth told them its economics were not quite up to academic standard, they quickly moved to safer ground. The main value of this book is to show precisely what this ground was (and one hopes that no present-day Fabian can contemplate the rag-bag of 'alien dogmas' involved without feeling distinctly uncomfortable).

The man who originally brought the group together was the Scottish mystic, Thomas Davidson. His version of socialism was inspired (among others) by the Italian priest Rosmini-Serbati and involved the establishment of spiritual colonies based on 'insight, love and well-directed labour' (probably in the Lake District). When Davidson switched his labours to Italy, the remaining Fabians fell back on a number of earlier inspirations: the small producer anarchism of Proudhon, the American anti-landlordism of Henry George and the philosophy of the French positivist Auguste Comte.

It was Comte who was probably the most pervasive influence, particularly with the Fabians' effective leader, Sidney Webb. Comte reacted against the untidy anarchism of competitive capitalism. In its place he proposed winning the capitalist *élite* for a unifying religion of humanist paternalism—a philosophy which, in essence, would not be unduly devalued by comparison with the ideas of Mary Baker Eddy and the Christian Scientists. It seems to have been largely from this source that the Fabians drew their strategy of 'permeation' and the *élit*ist collectivism of their 1889 *Essays*.

Naturally, there was more to the Fabians than just this. They lived in a real world which included working class struggle and had to contend with the practice of more scientific forms of socialism. But Dr Wolfe is not much interested in anything beyond 'intellectual influences'. His main contention is that it is the Fabian brand of socialism 'which has taken the firmest root in British politics', and that it did so by virtue of its direct intellectual descent from earlier radical traditions. This involves a good deal of unacceptable special pleading.

First, a clean-up job is done on earlier radical traditions, and all the class achievements of the Chartist period are brushed carefully under the carpet. Second, the parallel emergence of Marxist socialism in the 1880s is drastically written down: Engels is scarcely mentioned, the Social-Democratic Federation caricatured as a middle class coterie (Morris once again emerges as the romantic artist) and the vital developments in the London workingmen's clubs ignored.

Finally, there is no discussion of the Fabians' wider social role, of quite why they were adopted by the establishment just at the time when Britain's world monopoly was breaking down.

What was it that Lenin said? 'A gang of bourgeois humbugs whose aim it is to demoralise the workers and influence them in a counter-revolutionary direction'—men 'transmitting bourgeois-chauvinist ideas to the proletariat.' Dr Wolfe might do well to ponder this 'discovery' before he carries his studies of the Fabians into the 1890s.

JOHN FOSTER

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A History of Russian and Soviet Sea Power
Donald W. Mitchell
André Deutsch, 656 pp, £6.50

A REVIEW of this massive tome just over a year since its publication in Britain, though belated, has been made timely by naval and political developments in the course of that year. It should be read attentively by those who are surprised by current publicity regarding the maritime development of the USSR, and have been misled by the interpretations ascribed to that development by the 'experts' responsible for that publicity, with certain noble exceptions.

The credibility of these 'experts' may be gauged by the way in which they have found it convenient, especially of late, to denounce Fleet Admiral Sergei G. Gorshkov, the Soviet equivalent of our First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, for his allegedly 'aggressive' intentions, while ignoring in general his major article, headed 'Navies in war and in peace', which was serialised in eleven consecutive issues of *Morskoy sbornik*, the official organ of the Soviet Navy, during 1972-73. In that article he showed clearly that the historical mission of Russian and Soviet sea power has always been, and remains, essentially *defensive*. It is noteworthy in this connection, moreover, that Mr Mitchell, in attempting to whitewash the false appreciations of the situation for which these 'experts' have been repeatedly responsible, states categorically that the alleged 'facts' regarding the Soviet naval build-up on which they have based their arguments are derived from sources which are generally regarded as authoritative: 'Even such standard reference books as *Brassey's Naval Annual* and *Janes's Fighting Ships* for several years published the names of ships later found to be non-existent.'

Mr Mitchell, an American who is Professor of the Political Science Department at Northeast Missouri State University, has rendered a service to English-speaking readers by exposing the foregoing and providing them with the correct historical background, running back over eleven centuries, against which Soviet maritime development can be seen to be quite normal and acceptable. It is a pity, therefore, that he has spoiled his case on occasion, as, for instance, when he writes: 'Soviet attempts to pressure the Turks into sharing control of the Dardanelles and to set up a communist regime in Greece led ultimately to the Truman Doctrine.' For there is good reason to suppose, on the contrary, that British intervention in Greece at the end of 1944, to impose a fascist regime on the Greek liberation movement, made Stalin realise that Churchill wanted the post-war Mediterranean to remain under naval domination by Britain and her Western allies, notwithstanding the vital importance to the USSR of its maritime trade routes through that sea. Similar blindness affects the author also, though in his case it may be excused on the ground that he is a civilian and a land-lubber, when he criticises the USSR for having 'lacked whole series of inventions in communications, electronics, submarines, etc', during the second world war. I happen to know through a naval friend of mine who was involved in inter-allied exchanges in this field, that details of inventions which might be useful for the prosecution of the war against their common fascist enemies were consistently withheld from our Soviet ally!

Students of current developments in relation to the US sea/air base on the island of Diego Garcia, now blocked by the US Senate's refusal to spend any more on the project,

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pending negotiation with the Russians of a moratorium on the construction of bases in the Indian Ocean (*Times* and *Financial Times*, November 7), which has been proposed repeatedly by the Soviet government, will find interesting revelations about this matter on pages 573-7. These are anomalously indexed under 'Indian Ocean, Soviet penetration of'.

COMMANDER EDGAR P. YOUNG
RN (Retired)

Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941-1945
M. M. Minasyan and others
Progress (Central Books), 450 pp, £3.50

THE TASK of reviewing this mammoth book in not more than 500 words, already difficult, is made much more so by the fact that it has no index, either to the text or to the excellent maps and eight pages of photographs with which it is illustrated. This lack is a serious one, both for the lay reader and for the historian, but recommends the more that it should be read carefully from cover to cover, as this reviewer has done, for it gives to English readers the first picture of that part of the second world war in which the Soviet Union fought as our ally, as seen from the Soviet side, represented by 26 eminent authors. In doing this it corrects quite a number of misunderstandings still current, unfortunately, in Britain and other countries of the West.

(*This review by Edgar Young was unfinished when he died while working at it on November 10, 1975*—Ed. *LM*)

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